

# “The Life of Abraham Lincoln” Educational Project Narrative

## Project Summary

The opportunity we present for your consideration involves the creation of a powerful vehicle to enhance, educate and reconnect Americans of all ages with our treasured Abraham Lincoln heritage. “The Life of Abraham Lincoln” painting, by Thomas Kennedy, received the unanimous support of the Indiana Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial commission one year ago when it was named “the official Indiana Bicentennial painting” at the recommendation of Governor Mitch Daniels. Since that time, the State of Kentucky has also adopted it as their official bicentennial painting, and it has received endorsement from both the State of Illinois and the National Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission. Thomas Kennedy, a southern Indiana artist, has received notable personal recognition over the past year, including “The Distinguished Hoosier” award as well as being named a “Kentucky Colonel” for his work. A unique partnership has been formed between Dr. Suellen Reed, former Supt. of Public Instruction of the Indiana Department of Education, The Indiana Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial and Thomas Kennedy’s Lincoln Legacy group in an effort to place a copy of this painting in every accredited school (2,267) in the state of Indiana. In addition, this magnificent work is to be accompanied by an educational component specifically designed by the Indiana Department of Education, a personalized narrative prepared by the artist, as well as an accreditation certificate prominently denoting our project partners.

The purpose of this venture would be to enhance the knowledge of Abraham Lincoln, his life and legacy. Agreeably, there is no greater influence in our community than our school systems. Educators mold the future lives of our students and have a significant impact both inside and outside the classroom.

Population groups targeted would include students, faculty, family and visitors. The sheer number of parents, grandparents, siblings, and visitors that pass through the doors of each school, every day, would receive a constant reminder of Abraham Lincoln’s unwavering commitment that “right makes might”, as he led our nation through perilous times.

It is our goal to have the framed prints along with the support materials delivered and in place by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of the 2009-2010 school year. This is very timely as we anticipate completing the project by the end of the Indiana Bicentennial Celebration year of 2009.

In addition, this will create a state/national model by utilizing the painting, in lieu of the traditional textbook approach, as an innovative instructional tool to encourage visual thinking strategies and open discussion.

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The numerous scenes surrounding the central portrait of Lincoln are resources for careful investigation and discussion. A process known as *Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)* created by Harvard-trained psychologist Abigail Housen and museum educator Philip Yenawine would be very helpful to teachers and students in exploring the details of “The Life of Abraham Lincoln.” This process encourages student discussion facilitated by the teacher and incorporates inquiry and response by asking a set of questions. The students’ discoveries, insights, and speculations should lead to further reading, research, and activities. Exploration of the painting can be an effective springboard to deeper understandings about the life and times of Lincoln and relevance to contemporary issues and events.

It is the artist’s intention to make as many personalized classroom visits as time permits to have one-on-one classroom discussions directly with the students. The SIEC will also serve as a centralized location to link up to 8 classes simultaneously for question & answer sessions. Teachers may observe and document students’ responses and free thinking association skills during these sessions.

Please note that we have a current working list of potential project partners and continue to make new contacts. We are very fortunate to have received commitment or have pending commitments with the following partners: TMMI (Toyota-Princeton), Alcoa, TEMA (Toyota North America), McGraw Hill, Jasper Engines & Transmissions, Vectren Foundation, Kimball, Horseshoe Foundation, Old National Bank and statewide Community Foundations (grant requests in process based upon grant proposal deadlines).

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Note: To view the painting, go to <http://thomaskennedyslincoln.com>